

Legislators Travel "On the Nod"

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By J. GRATTON GREY

IT HAS been frequently remarked by persons more or less acquainted with the actual conditions existing that Australia is the paradise of the working-man. However accurate or exaggerated the assertion may be, there is no doubt about its truthful application to members of Parliament. Search the world over, go to every country where the system of parliamentary representation is in vogue, and you will fail to find a single instance in which the position of a member of the legislature is comparable for ease and reward with that of the parliamentarian in Australia.

From the time of his election until the termination of his parliamentary career, he reposes upon a bed of roses. He is paid most liberally for the little he does; and if he succeeds in attaining to ministerial rank, he revels in the lap of luxury, and does nothing that is commensurate with the measure of his emoluments. In corroboration of what I say, I shall deal first of all with the federal legislature. In the Constitution Act under which it was created and inaugurated in 1901, provision was made for the election of a Senate of 36 members and a House of Representatives of 75 members upon the same franchise—namely, adult suffrage under which every male and female, upon attaining the age of 21 years, was entitled to one vote at any election for either the Senate or the House of Representatives.

For the House, Australia was divided into 75 single constituencies, with a three years' term (barring intervening dissolutions) for elected candidates.

For the Senate, each of the six states formed one constituency, and at the first election, the voters struck out the names of all candidates other than the six they desired to see elected. For Senators the term was six years, but at the next general election at the end of three years (or sooner if a dissolution occurred) the three of the six Senators originally elected who happened to be the three lowest on the poll of the successful candidates, automatically lost their seats, and had to fight for their seats again, if they happened to be nominated by the parties manipulating the political machine. Thus it is that three Senators in each state are obliged to face the electors at the general election for members of the House every three years, or sooner if there happens to be an interim dissolution of both chambers.

The pay originally fixed was the same for Senators and Representatives alike—namely \$2,000 a year. But they had their expenses paid to and from Melbourne if they traveled by sea, and free passes upon all railways as often as they pleased to travel about.

After a few years members of the federal Parliament, taking advantage of the fact that there was nothing in the Constitution Act to prevent their doing so without the previous consent of the electors, raised their own salaries to \$3,000 a year, despite the howl of indignation that was raised all over the country at the time, and in defiance of numerous signed petitions presented to the governor-general, protesting against the increase. I know it does not equal the emoluments paid to Senators and Representatives in America, but the disparity between the two incomes immediately disappears when the enormously vaster problems and activities and diversity of interests to be dealt with in the United States are considered, as well as the fact that there Congressmen are legislating for the requirements of a population of over one hundred million, whereas in Australia less than one-twentieth of that total represents all the men, women and children on the Australian Continent. As to the relative proportions of the public duties imposed upon Congressmen in America and Senators and Representatives in Australia, my personal knowledge obtained in both countries enables me to say that the time and labor exacted from the average American federal legislator are greatly in excess of the demands upon the time and energies of the average parliamentarian in this country, and he is paid much more in proportion to what he does than his more highly reimbursed prototype in the United States.

Besides, there are perquisites of various kinds occasionally coming along the path of the Australian

member of Parliament, besides his free railway pass which enables him to travel as often as he pleases over the railways of all the six states, and the Federal Great West trunk, and also to have his wife assured free transit "on the nod" over all these railroads. And if his parliamentary career turns out so successful as to provide him with cabinet rank, from the two or three pounds a week he used to earn before he was fortunate enough to secure a seat in Parliament, he becomes comparatively a millionaire, and has a mansion instead of an unpretentious weatherboard cottage in which to live.

Talking of the rank and file in Parliament—that is to say, members who are not on the Cabinet benches as ministers—many of them carry on their usual occupations as lawyers, doctors, merchants, squatters, auctioneers, stock and station agents, and so forth, and the parliamentary salaries of these members are merely additions to their ordinary incomes. They are simply in Parliament more to represent and protect the interests of the conservative class to which they belong than for the sake of their parliamentary salaries. Others, too, continue to carry on their operations as commercial travelers and the fact that they possess free passes over all the railways in the country gives them a most unfair advantage over the representatives of other commercial and manufacturing establishments who have to purchase railway tickets like other members of the public.

IT WILL give American readers an accurate conception of the easy times enjoyed by members of both branches of the federal legislature when they learn that the sessions last for only a few months of the year, with long recesses for members to recuperate their "wasted energies." Often, as has happened during the war period, the Houses, without being prorogued, have stood adjourned for several months at a stretch, and members have gone away wheresoever they pleased in the meantime—sometimes to their own homes far and near, sometimes for pleasure excursions to different states, sometimes for a trip to New Zealand, or for a round tour of the more adjacent Pacific Islands, and sometimes as far away as Great Britain and America. Even when Parliament is in session, no deductions are made from the salaries of absent members. These are safeguarded in their entirety by resolutions granting leave of absence, against which there could be no reasonable objection if a member's absence was due to illness of himself or of some member of his household; but the practice is grossly abused, and it frequently happens that an absent member is looking after his own business affairs, while he is drawing public money for the performance of parliamentary duties which he absolutely neglects. But these motions for leave of absence encounter no opposition for the simple reason that they are founded upon the give-and-take principle and if Benson joins in granting leave of absence to Jones today, Jones will as cordially reciprocate by obliging Benson in the same way tomorrow.

When in attendance in the parliamentary chambers either as Senators or Representatives, members recline upon luxuriously upholstered benches. Livered messengers are at their beck and call, and if they experience a feeling of weariness with the debates or with business in which they take no particular interest, they may withdraw to their respective party rooms, go and have a game of cards, billiards, devil's pool or snooker, stroll out to the adjacent lawns and join in a game of tennis, take a bee line for the refreshment rooms, where they can obtain anything they call for to eat, as well as to drink, from a brandy or whisky cocktail to a glass of unfortified soda water or equally harmless ginger ale; or, if they be of a studious disposition and desire to read or to obtain statistical or other information, bearing upon subjects they intend to ventilate from their place in the House or Senate, they can betake themselves to the parliamentary library, the use of which is restricted to members, the principal

officers of Parliament, a few heads of government departments, and a select circle of privileged outsiders—a library altogether different from the beautiful publicly serviceable and well-stocked Library of Congress in Washington, which is accessible to everybody without distinction from an early hour of the morning till late at night.

All these provisions for his comfort and recreation are at the disposal, free of charge, of the federal member of Parliament in Australia—all except what he eats and drinks in the refreshment rooms, but the charges are so moderate that the upkeep of the establishment invariably exceeds its income, and a considerable sum has to be annually appropriated from the federal exchequer in order to square the ledger.

Consider, then, the time which is devoted to the dispatch of business in the Commonwealth Parliament. The House and Senate assemble at three o'clock on Wednesday afternoons. After sitting two or three hours, they adjourn for an hour and a half for dinner. Resuming after that meal, they seldom sit later than ten or eleven o'clock, as members living or lodging in the suburbs must catch the latest trains and trams. The same program is repeated on Thursday, but on Friday the Houses meet at half past ten in the morning, and after the lunch adjournment, they rise about four o'clock in the afternoon, and do not reassemble until three o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday of the week following. This unconscionable adjournment every week from Friday to the following Wednesday has been brought into practice to enable our dreadfully overworked members to spend the week-ends, as they term the greater part of the whole week, at their more or less distant homes, and to afford Ministers more time to devote to the administrative affairs of the departments over which they preside. No real justification whatever can be advanced for the "playing at Parliament" which goes on in this country, and the public is becoming very sick and tired of the costly burlesque. It must not be forgotten, too, that for each day a minister of the Crown is absent from the temporary seat of government, in addition to all traveling expenses he draws an allowance of two guineas per day, besides his salary.

State members of Parliament are not so well paid as those who hold seats in the federal legislature, but in most other respects they are upon an almost equal footing with regard to the comforts and privileges they enjoy. As a rule, they devote more time to the discharge of their legislative functions, and many of them regard state service as the stepping stone to federal membership. Each state has two Houses—Legislative Council and Assembly. In some states the members of the Legislative Councils are nominated for life by the Crown; in others, they are elected upon a limited franchise. The Assembly in each state is elected for three years by ballot, adults of both sexes being allowed to vote. The pay has ranged from \$1,000 in South Australia to \$1,250 in the island state of Tasmania, \$1,500 in Victoria, West Australia and Queensland, and \$2,500 in New South Wales. Recently, Tasmanian members raised their pay to \$1,500, and a week or two ago feelers were put out by some Victorian members to raise their salaries to \$2,250 or \$2,500, but popular protest quickly silenced the proposal, as it also as indignantly repulsed the preposterous suggestion that as a peace memento free railway passes for life should be granted to all present members of the Victorian State Parliament. Already, free passes for life are given to all past and present members of the Executive Council in this and other states, and future ministers will have similar privileges conferred upon them, unless in the meantime the growing popular feeling results in the abolition of free railway passes altogether. At present, when a man becomes a member of a Legislative Council or Assembly, he is immediately provided with a free railway pass, which dangles from his watch-chain as long as he retains his membership; and the federal member has a similar gold token to indicate to railway officials who might otherwise be oblivious of his status that he belongs to that numerous army in Australia which always travels "on the nod."

The Law's Delay

ANYONE who has ever had the misfortune to become involved in a lawsuit can testify to the fact that legal procedure is, to say the least, leisurely, and while most persons would admit that undue haste would not be conducive to a clear understanding and full justice, still, at times it would seem that deliberation is carried a bit too far. Every locality has its story of a famous long-continuing action, but no community in the United States can enter a competition for honors in this respect with Europe, and particularly France.

One lawsuit which demanded the attention of the French courts for quite a respectable period was begun in the year 1210 by the Comte de Nevers against the inhabitants of Donzy, and was not finally concluded until 1848, the litigation having continued for six hundred and thirty-eight years! Another, begun in 1254, by the inhabitants of Campan against those of Bagneres, continued its leisurely course for a similar period of six hundred and thirty-eight years, being concluded in 1892.

The thirteenth century seems to have been fruitful in the production of these long-running suits, for another, also begun in 1254 and by the same Campan folks, against four villages in Aneau, and which is therefore now six hundred and sixty-five years old, is still unsettled.

One might think these cases involved vast estates or other matters of great importance. Perhaps the lawyers find technical points of terrible difficulty, but to the layman it seems much ado about nothing—in each case pasture and forest rights only were involved.

Favors Forced Training —Not Service

THE National Guard Association of the United States favors compulsory universal military training of every young man in the country capable of bearing arms. As an adequate measure of preparedness it favors compulsory military training, "just as it believes that every boy should be taught to read and write, and trained to earn his own livelihood, and render military service to the country, should the country call." The foregoing is an excerpt from a statement issued by the organization over the signature of Col. John B. Rose, chairman.

At the same time it is stated that the Association is opposed to any form of compulsory military SERVICE which unnecessarily seizes a boy from his home and those good influences which are as necessary, in character building, as the technic of war which he might be taught in professional schools. "Compulsory universal service thrusts him (the youth) into the regular military household at an age when he is not fully qualified to decide for himself; and possibly influences him, against the wishes of his parents and against what would be his own mature judgment, to lead the life of a professional soldier with all its temptations, and surrounded by the narrow influences with which broad men know that the soldier's life is filled. At the same time, it could not in three or six months make a finished soldier out of him in the accepted sense of the word."

Leisure Methods in India

IN INDIA the requirements of successful salesmanship are unique. There are more than 300,000,000 inhabitants to be considered as representing the country's buying strength; of these but a relatively small number are of European descent. Commercial methods framed to meet the exigencies of a market governed by European ideals will require liberal amendment if they are to be applied successfully to non-European conditions. In like degree a man who understands thoroughly the complications of commercial intercourse with the former may fail entirely through not understanding the vastly different intricacies of the latter. Immediate results, orders by mail or cable within a few days of the salesman's arrival in his new sphere are seldom possible. Just here the man at home is often led into error and the salesman abroad called to account for not doing as he has been wont to elsewhere. Of India in a marked degree it is true that quick sales are improbable, for India is not a country of hurry. This will appear at a glance. For example, the banks open for business at 11 a. m., the average business man is seldom in his office before that hour, and thus the day's work must be done in at least two hours less time than in more familiar countries. An hour and a half for luncheon is quite usual, and by five the offices are deserted.

The consequence is that the day's work is materially reduced in volume, hours for engagements are fewer, and the salesman, fresh from America, full of American enthusiasm and keen to get results, is often obliged to submit to delays which he finds irksome; but the only way to do business is to do it in India's fashion.